

loom large even if the American taxpayers were willing to continue present subsidies. And they are not.

When the private railroads turned over their passenger business to the Government in 1971, Congress made what was referred to as a one-time grant of \$140 million for startup help. More than two decades later, a total of about \$15 billion in taxpayer assistance has been granted to Amtrak.

This legislation seeks to achieve the evolution of a passenger rail network in this Nation which can be viable on greatly reduced taxpayer subsidies. Current Federal subsidies for Amtrak, including operating, capital, and mandatory retirement payments, total more than \$1 billion annually. Of that total, nearly \$400 million is for operating subsidies. The goal of this legislation would be to reduce and possibly phase out the operating subsidies over a 5-year period.

In December, the Amtrak Board of Directors took very positive action in announcing some route closings, truncations, and frequency reductions. But these realignments were targeted only at dealing with the current revenue shortfall of about \$200 million. These decisions, painful as they were, represent just the first step. Much more remains to be done.

Since some of Amtrak's unprofitable routes have been mandated by Congress, it is imperative that Congress provide Amtrak with the assistance needed to reinvent this system into one that is operated under strict business principles.

My legislation would remove the painful decisions that must be made from the political realm and place them in the hands of an independent Commission modeled after BRAC, the Base Realignment and Closure Commission. The Total Realignment of Amtrak Commission [TRAC] would conduct an economic analysis of the entire Amtrak system and hold public hearings around the country to ensure that the public and other stakeholders were given the opportunity to be heard. This would be as fair a process as humanly possible with the end goal to make recommendations on route closings and other realignments urgently needed to ensure the survival of a passenger rail system in America.

In addition to economic data, TRAC would also review nonmonetary data such as the contributions made by certain routes toward alleviation of airport congestion, pollution abatement, and energy conservation. This Commission would also examine alternative modes of transportation in rural areas, as well as look at uses communities could make of abandoned rail lines.

Under my legislation, no segment of the Amtrak system would be exempt from review, including the Northeast corridor. TRAC would also examine the ridership forecasts and other assumptions underlying the Northeast corridor, particularly with respect to the continuation of the electrification of this corridor from New Haven to Boston, a project that will demand large subsidies in future years. This is about a \$2 billion project, with nearly \$500 million already expended.

The recommendations of this Commission would not be limited to a system which offers national, interconnected service. After the completion of systemwide economic analysis, the Commission could find, for example, that the only system which can be justified to the taxpayers is one that provides regional serv-

ices. However, connectivity could be an option examined by States along currently unprofitable long haul routes. If States would decide to continue service along such routes slated for closure, State officials could contract with Amtrak to continue service, possibly using flexibility under block grants.

I would point out that, under current law, this Commission would face a difficult dilemma. Because the Rail Labor Protection Act mandates payment of 6 years of full benefits to any rail worker who loses a job due to a route closing, many of the most unprofitable routes would cost more to close than to keep them limping along at a loss. In fact, under the 30-mile rule also in current law, an Amtrak employee is entitled to demand the full severance package if he is merely relocated 30 miles or more. No union workers in the private sector are afforded such generous severance compensation, and these astronomical costs are one of the reasons that every trip on this system costs American taxpayers \$25.

My colleague, Mr. BARTON of Texas, has reintroduced his legislation to remedy this dilemma by limiting such severance benefits to 6 months and by eliminating the so-called 30-mile rule. I am supporting my colleague's bill and its speedy enactment would be very helpful to the decisions which would have to be made by the route closing Commission.

After conducting a complete, systemwide, economic review, TRAC would present its recommendations to Congress. The Commission's recommendations would then be considered by Congress under an expedited timeframe with no amendments permitted and an up-or-down vote.

The members of TRAC would be appointed by the President and by the majority leadership in the House and Senate, in consultation with minority leadership in both bodies. My legislation calls for the membership of the Commission to be comprised of individuals with expertise in rail finance, economic analysis, legal issues, and other relevant areas. Also serving on the Commission would be the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Transportation, one representative of a rail labor union, and one member of rail management.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I would reiterate that saving passenger rail service in this country requires objective analysis and urgent remedies. And, I believe it has to be a system that we can justify to the taxpayers.

TRIBUTE TO COL. WILLIAM F. GABELLA

HON. SCOTT McINNIS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 6, 1995

Mr. McINNIS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Col. William F. Gabella, who recently received his Master of Law (LLM) in Air and Space Law from McGill University in Montreal, Canada.

Mr. Speaker, as Colonel Gabella receives his degree, I would like to join his colleagues, family, and friends throughout the community of Canon City in congratulating him. Colonel Gabella is an individual whom I greatly admire and respect, and I am pleased to salute him on this important occasion.

This amazing accomplishment was arrived at by hard work and great intelligence. Colonel

Gabella is a credit to Colorado and I'm proud to say he resides in my congressional district.

My best wishes to Colonel Gabella and his family. He has made all who know him proud.

A TRIBUTE TO PHILLIP L. WILLIS, AN AMERICAN HERO

HON. JOHN BRYANT

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 6, 1995

Mr. BRYANT of Texas. Mr. Speaker, one can tell a lot about a man by what he chooses to do with his life. And Phillip LaFrance Willis was an American hero who chose to live his to the fullest.

This much decorated veteran of World War II died of leukemia on Friday, January 27, 1994, at his home in Dallas.

Phil Willis, major, U.S. Air Force, retired. That is how he will be best remembered. And that is the way he would want to be remembered.

At daybreak on December 8, 1941—the morning after the day of infamy—23-year-old Second Lieutenant Willis, wearing his cowboy boots as he patrolled a beach near Pearl Harbor, captured America's first enemy prisoner of World War II.

Until his retirement as a 28-year-old major as a result of combat injuries in 1946, Phil Willis served with distinction as a B-17 bomber pilot through the Battles of Midway, Guadalcanal, the Coral Sea, New Guinea, and New Britain.

In 52 missions, he was credited with sinking four ships, including one of Japan's largest troop transports, and a submarine and shooting down eight enemy aircraft. He walked away from two downed bombers in the Pacific without losing a crewmember.

His service earned him more than 20 decorations, making him among the most decorated Texas pilots of the war and winning him a place in the Army Air Corps Hall of Fame at Brooks Field in San Antonio.

Born in Kaufman County, TX, on August 2, 1918, Phil Willis did not confine his patriotism to military service.

Throughout his 76 years, Phil Willis was devoted to his country, his community, and his fellow citizens. Whether in uniform, in appointed or elective public office, in community and veterans organizations, or in private life, he was devoted to public service. Loyalty always guided him.

While working to earn his 1948 undergraduate degree from North Texas State University, now the University of North Texas, the young veteran was elected to the Texas House of Representatives from Kaufman County, where he served two terms.

Simultaneously elected to the Texas Legislature, Phil and his brother, Doyle Willis, who continues to serve with distinction, are the only two brothers to have served together in the Texas House of Representatives.

Phil Willis also served as a member of the San Antonio Zoning and Planning Commission and was a Texas Centennial Statehood Commissioner. As a real estate broker, builder, and developer, he was always active in professional and business affairs.